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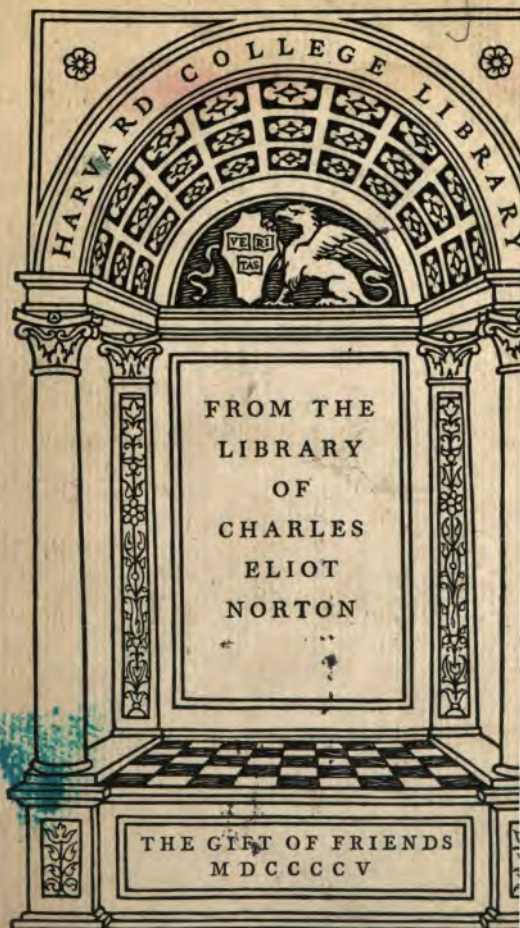
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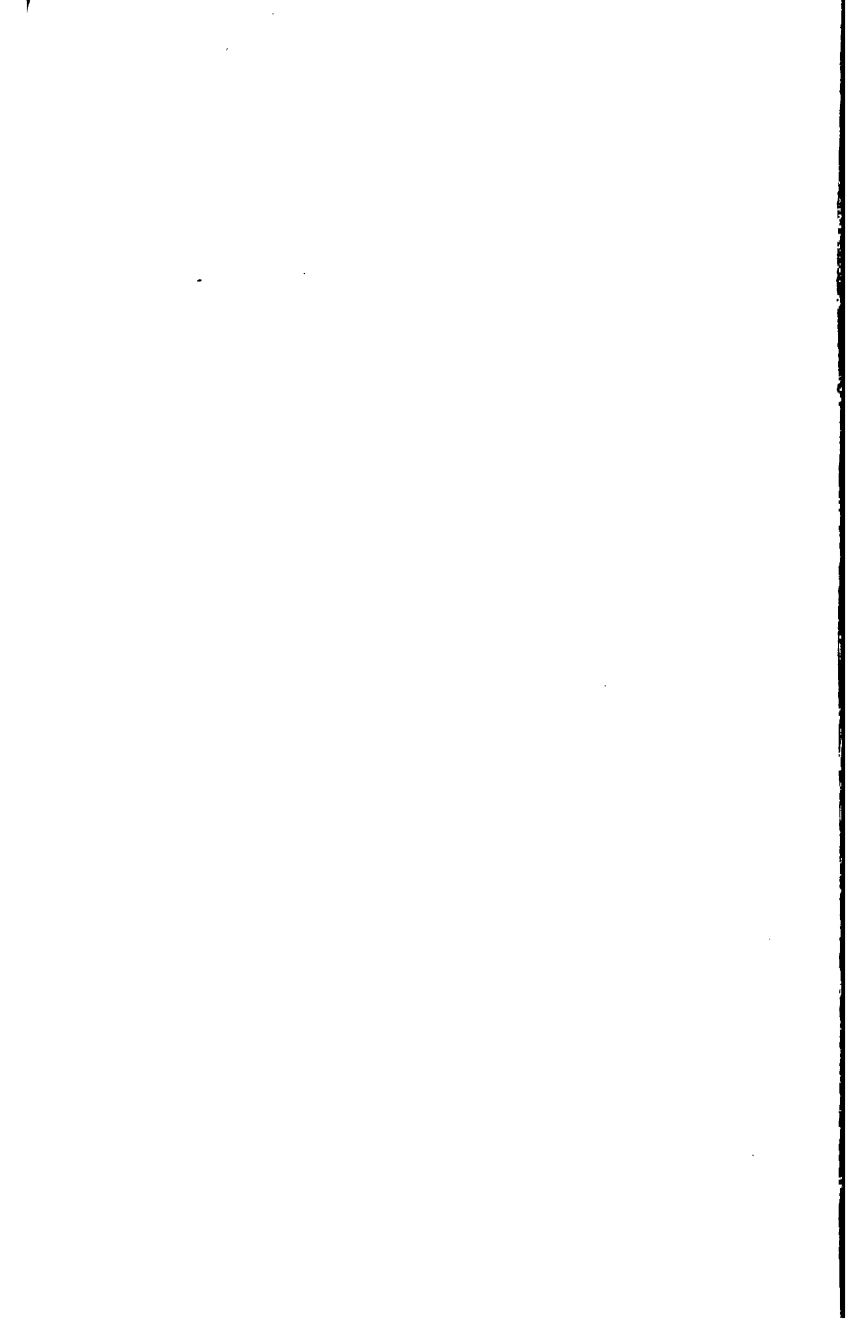
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IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

A

Drama in Five Acts.

BY

GOETHE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

BY

G. J. ADLER, A. M.

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GOETHE'S
IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS.

A Drama in Five Acts.

Ἴτ', ὦ πνοαί, ναυσβλοῦτε τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονος
παῖδ' εἰς Ἀθήνας· συμπορεύσομαι δ' ἐγὼ,
σώζουσ' ἀδελφῆς τῆς ἐμῆς σεμνὸν βρέτας.
ἴτ' ἐπ' εὐτυχίᾳ τῆς σωζομένης
μοίρας, εὐδαίμονες ὄντες.

EURIPIDES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

IPHIGENIA.

THOAS, *King of the Tauri.*

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

ARKAS.

SCENE.

The Grove before the Temple of Diana.

FIRST ACT.

FIRST SCENE.

IPHIGENIA.

YOUR shades, ye ever-moving lofty tops,
That fill with foliage dense this sacred grove,
And e'en Diana's quiet sanctuary,
I enter still with timid awe-struck feeling,
As when the first time I approached your pre-
cincts,
And never can my heart here feel at home.
So many a year doth keep me here concealed
A higher will, to which I am resigned ;
And yet I am a stranger, as at first.
For, ah, the sea divides me from my home,
And livelong days I stand here on the shore,

Seeking the fair land Hellas in my soul ;
But all the answer to my sigh responding
Comes from the billows' hollow-roaring din.
Unhappy, who from parents far and kindred,
Spends lonely days in dreary solitude !
For, from his very lips consuming grief
Doth snatch with greedy fang his nearest bliss.
His thoughts are ever wandering aside
To his ancestral halls, where first the sun
Unsealed the heavens to his admiring eye,
Where sporting comrades, linked by dearest ties,
In ever-closer union dwelt together.
I will not reason with the gods ; but still
I deem a woman's lot most lamentable.
Man rules at home both and in war,
Knows how to shift in strange and distant lands ;
Possessions bring him joy, the victory crowns
him !
He meets an honorable death in battle.
How circumscribed is woman's happiness !

To be submissive even to an uncouth husband
Is duty and her comfort ; but how wretched,
If dire misfortune drives her to a distance !
Thus Thoas holds me here, a noble man,
In stern, though sacred bonds of servitude.
Oh, how I blush to own, that I, O goddess,
With secret murmurings and reluctance serve
thee,

The deity of my deliverance ! Should not
My life be freely to thy service given ?

'Tis true, I always hoped in thee, Diana,
And still I trust in thee, who didst receive me,
The outcast daughter of the greatest king,
Into thy gentle, sacred arms of love.
Yes, Jove-born maid, if thou th' exalted man,
Whom thou tormentedst with thy dread com-
mand,

To immolate with bloody rite his daughter—
If thou the royal godlike Agamemnon,
Who led for thee his dearest to the altar,

From Troy's demolished walls triumphantly
Back to his native country hast conducted,
And safely hast preserved for him his wife,
Electra, his son and all his noble treasures ;
Oh, then at least grant me, too, safe return
To my own kinsmen ; set me also free,
Thou, who erewhile didst rescue me from death,
From this my present life, a second death !

SECOND SCENE.

IPHIGENIA.—ARKAS.

ARKAS.

I come here on a message from the king,
Who sends Diana's priestess joy and greeting.
This is the day, when Tauris to its goddess
For new and signal victories is indebted.
I hie before the king and following army,
To announce his own arrival, its approach.

IPHIGENIA.

We are prepared to give them meet reception,
And e'en our goddess waits with gracious look,
To accept from Thoas' hand the welcome gifts.

ARKAS.

Would that I also found the priestess' look,
The dear and venerated one, thy look,
O sacred maiden, brighter and more luminous,
Propitious omen to us all ! A grief
Mysterious still shrouds thy inmost soul ;
We wait, alas, this many a year in vain
For some confiding word to escape thy breast.
E'er since I knew thee in this sacred place,
Is this thy look, at which I ever shudder ;
And as with iron bands, thy soul remains
Forged to the inmost fibres of thy bosom.

IPHIGENIA.

As it behooves the exile and the orphan.

ARKAS.

Seem'st thou an exile and an orphan here ?

IPHIGENIA.

Can e'er a foreign land become our home ?

ARKAS.

Thou art become an alien now at home.

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis this that leaves my bleeding heart uncured.
In earliest youth, when scarce the tender soul
Had linked itself to father, mother, brother,
And we, new scions, strove in union sweet,
To rise from roots of ancient stem toward
heaven ;

'Twas then, alas, an ancient curse laid hold
On me, removed me from my loved ones,
And rent with iron fist that bond so fair,
Asunder. All the joys of youth, the thrift
Of my first years, were gone. Myself, though
saved,

Seemed but a shadow then, and fresh delight
Of life will since not bloom again in me.

ARKAS.

If thou wilt call thyself unhappy thus,
Then I may say, thou show'st ingratitude.

IPHIGENIA.

Thanks ye shall ever have.

ARKAS.

Not thanks sincere,
For which the deed of love is done with pleasure ;
The cheerful look that to the host exhibits
A life contented and a grateful heart.
When thee a deep mysterious destiny,
So many years ago, brought to this temple,
Then Thoas came with reverence and affection,
To welcome thee, the God-devoted maiden ;
And this our shore to thee was kind and friendly,
Ere now so terrible to every stranger ;

Since no one erst could enter this our realm,
Who did not fall before Diana's altar
A bloody victim to an ancient custom.

IPHIGENIA.

To breathe with freedom is not all of life.
What life is this, which, at this holy place,
As shades are said to dwell around their tomb,
I'm doomed to pass in mourning? Can I call
That life a cheerful and self-conscious one, when
Every day, in dreamlike reveries wasted,
Is but a prelude to those dismal days,
Which, at the banks of Lethe, self-forgetting
Troops of departed shades spend silently?

ARKAS.

This noble pride, which makes thee with thyself
Dissatisfied, I pardon, though it grieves me ;
It robs thee of the charm and happiness of life.
Hast thou done nothing here since thy arrival ?

Who, then, has cheered the gloomy mind of

Thoas ?

Who has with gently stern persuasion checked
That ancient ruthless custom here among us,
By which, on Dian's altar, every stranger
Bleeding his life hath left this many a year ?
Who has our prisoners from certain death
So often saved, and to their homes returned ?
Has not Diana, far from being incensed
For want of her accustomed bloody victims,
In richer measure heard thy gentle prayers ?
Doth Victory not with gladsome flight around
Our army sweep, nay, dart e'en in advance ?
And feels not every one his lot amended,
Since this our valiant king, who wisely led us
So many a year in-battle, thou being present,
Takes now delight in mild paternal sway,
Easing for us the task of mute obedience ?
Thou deem'st life useless toil, if from thy being
A balm descends upon a thousand wounds ?

If thou of new prosperity the eternal source
Art to the people, whom a god hath sent thee,
And on the inhospitable shore of death
Prepar'st to strangers safety and return ?

IPHIGENIA.

To one who forward looks to what is left,
The little done soon dwindles into nought.

ARKAS.

Thou praisest him who values not his deeds ?

IPHIGENIA.

Men censure him who nicely weighs his actions.

ARKAS.

Him, too, who proudly disregards true worth,
As him, who vainly elevates false worth.
Believe me ; listen to the words of one,
Who faithfully and truly is thy friend :
If aught the king to-day would say to thee,
Come to the aid of his embarrassment.

IPHIGENIA.

Each word of thine, though kindly meant, afflicts me.

Oft have I struggled to avoid his suit.

ARKAS.

Consider what thou dost, and thine advantage;
E'er since the king has lost his only son,
He trusts but few of all his former vassals,
And e'en these few no longer as before.
With envious eye he sees his realm's successor
In every noble's son, and anxious dreads
A helpless solitary age; nay, even
Bold insurrection and an early death.
The Scythian puts no confidence in words,
And least of all, the king. Can he who only
Hath been accustomed to command and act,
Know the smooth art to guide a conversation
From distant objects slowly to his purpose?
Do not, by coy refusal or designed

Misunderstanding, aggravate his case,
But half-way meet complaisantly his suit.

IPHIGENIA.

Shall I accelerate what threatens me?

ARKAS.

A threatening danger wilt thou call his courtship?

IPHIGENIA.

It is to me the frightfullest of all.

ARKAS.

Do but return his love with confidence.

IPHIGENIA.

If he deliver first my soul from fear.

ARKAS.

Why dost thou hide thy origin from him?

IPHIGENIA.

Reserve and secrecy behoove a priestess.

ARKAS.

There should be nothing hid before the king.
Though he does not demand it, still he feels,
And feels it deeply in his noble soul,
That thou art shyly on thy guard against him.

IPHIGENIA.

Feeds he chagrin and discontent against me?

ARKAS.

It almost seems so. Still he speaks not of thee.
But words at random uttered taught me :
The wish is firmly rooted in his soul,
To own thee as his wedded spouse. Then leave,
O leave him not unto himself, or else
Chagrin may, festering in his bosom, ripen,
And bring thee terror ; then thou wouldst remember
Too late, and with regret, my kind advice,

IPHIGENIA.

Could Thoas purpose, what no noble man,
Who loves his name, and in whose bosom
A reverence for the heavenly gods abides,
Could ever meditate? Thinks he by force
To drag me from the altar to his bed?
Then I invoke you all, ye gods, and thee,
Diana, first, the goddess resolute,
Who being thyself a maid, wilt gladly grant
Protection to a maiden and thy priestess.

ARKAS.

Be quiet! no impetuous new blood
Impels the king audaciously to do
Such rash and youthful deed. As now he thinks,
I dread another and more stern resolve,
Which he inexorably will perform;
For resolute and firm was e'er his soul.
Therefore confide in him, be grateful, pray,
If other favors thou canst not bestow.

IPHIGENIA.

O say, what farther is yet known to thee?

ARKAS.

The king himself may tell; I see him coming.
Thou truly honor'st him; thine own heart
prompts thee
To meet him affably and with confidence.
The kind word of a woman can effect
Much on a noble man.

IPHIGENIA.

Indeed, I see not
How I shall follow his well-meant advice,
Yet willingly will I obey my duty,
To accost the king, my benefactor, blandly.
I hope, that I may tell the potent man
Both what may meet his wishes, and be true.

THIRD SCENE.

IPHIGENIA.—THOAS.

IPHIGENIA.

With royal blessings may the goddess bless thee !
Both fame and victory, wealth and happiness
Of all thy realm, of every pious wish
Ample fulfillment may she deign to grant thee !
That thou, who caring rulest over many,
May'st also be preëminent in fortune.

THOAS.

Contented were I, did my people thank me.
What I acquired, others more enjoy
Than I. He is by far most happy, be he
A king or humble man, for whose enjoyment
Domestic welfare reigns at home unclouded.
Thou didst participate in my deep sorrow,
When by a hostile sword my dearest son,
The last and best, was severed from my side.

The gloomy desert of my house I felt not
Whilst vengeance had possession of my soul,
But now, that satisfied, I have returned ;
Their kingdom being destroyed, my son avenged,
There's nothing left at home now to delight me.
That glad obedience which I once could see
Expressed in every beaming eye, is now
By secret care and rank chagrin destroyed.
Each one revolves what future days may bring,
Obeys the childless king, because he must.
To-day I enter now this sacred temple,
Where oft I went to pray for victory,
Or thank for victory. An ancient wish
I cherish in my bosom, which to thee
Can also be nor strange nor unexpected.
I hope to lead thee to my house as bride,
A blessing to my people, to myself.

IPHIGENIA.

This offer to a stranger is too great,
O king ; the fugitive must stand abashed

Before thy face, who on this shore sought no-
thing
Save rest and safety, which thou kindly grantedst.

THOAS.

That thou shouldst hide thyself within the mys-
tery
Of thy descent, as if from death, before me,
Among no people would be just and proper.
This shore repels the stranger ; our own law
Commands it, and necessity. From thee,
However, who enjoy'st all sacred rights,
A well-receivéd guest with us, and free
To spend thy days here at thy will and pleasure,
From thee I hoped such confidence to win,
As friends for their devotion may expect.

IPHIGENIA.

If I concealed from thee my origin
And family, embarrassment—believe me—

And not unkind suspicion, was the reason.
For, didst thou know, perhaps, who stands before
thee,

What fatal and devoted head thou here
Dost nourish and protect, affright would seize
Thy generous breast with unaccustomed shud-
der ;

And then, instead of offering me to share
Thy throne, thou wouldst expel me prematurely
Out of thy realm, perhaps wouldst cast me out,
Ere to my family a glad return,
And of my wanderings a happy end,
Were granted me—to misery expose me,
Which every where the wandering homeless exile
Awaits, with strange unfeeling hand of terror.

THOAS.

Whate'er the counsel of the gods may be
About thee or thy house's destiny,
There is not wanting, since thou dwell'st among
us,

Enjoying here the pious right of guest,
That blessing, which descendeth from above.
Indeed, it were not easy to convince me
That I protect a guilty head in thee.

IPHIGENIA.

— Thy kindness brings thee blessing, not the guest.

THOAS.

What's done to reprobates, is never blessed.
Cease, therefore, thy refusal and thy silence ;
No unjust man demands this favor of thee.
A goddess to my hands committed thee ;
As thou to her wast sacred, so to me.
In future, too, her nod shall be my law :
If thou canst homeward hope for safe return,
I will acquit thee of all obligation.
But if this way for ever is debarred thee,
Or if thy tribe be driven from its seat,
Or has become extinct by dire misfortune,

By more than one law then wilt thou be mine.
Speak freely ! and thou know'st I keep my word.

IPHIGENIA.

My tongue reluctantly breaks loose at last
From ancient fetters, to unveil
A secret long concealed. For when once
Intrusted, it doth leave without return
Its sure abode within our inmost heart,
Brings weal or prejudice, as gods direct it.
Hear then ! I am from Tantalus descended !

THOAS.

Thou speak'st a grave word with tranquillity.
Dost thou call him thy grandsire, whom the world
Knows as erewhile the highly favored minion
Of all the gods ? Is it that Tantalus,
Whom Jove admitted to his board and council ;
In whose discourse, so full of ripe experience,
Replete with wisdom, even the gods themselves,
As in oracular responses, took delight ?

IPHIGENIA.

It is ; but gods should never deign to hold
With men as with their peers familiar converse ;
The race of mortals is by far too weak,
Not to grow giddy on unaccustomed heights.
Ignoble he was not, nor e'er a traitor ;
But for the serf of thundering Jove too great,
For his associate but a man. Thus was
His crime a human error too ; their judgment
Was rigorous, and poets sing, that faithless
And insolent demeanor thrust him down
From Jove's abode to ancient Tartarus.
Alas ! and his whole race has borne their hate.

THOAS.

And was their guilt or their progenitor's the
cause ?

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis true the Titan's powerful breast
And vigorous marrow were the sure bequest

Of all his sons and grandsons ; still the god
Did rivet round their brow an iron band.
Discretion, counsel, moderation, patience
Were hidden from their shy and cloudy look.
Each appetite in them was fierce desire,
Raging with boundless terror all around.
E'en Pelops, man of powerful resolve,
The cherished son of Tantalus, did win
By treachery and guilt his fairest spouse,
The daughter of Œnomaus, Hippodamia.
Two sons she bore to her delighted husband,
Thyestes called and Atreus. They envious
Beheld their father's love to his first son,
Growing up with them from another bed.
Hatred allies them ; and they both attempt
Clandestinely their first nefarious deed.
The father then thinks Hippodamia
The culprit, and demands with furious threats
His son from her again ; and she destroys
Herself——

THOAS.

Art silent? Pray go on to speak!
Let not thy confidence in me repent thee.

IPHIGENIA.

O happy, who in virtuous ancestors
Can take delight; who gladly with their deeds
And with their greatness entertains the hearer,
Rejoicing in his heart to see himself
Linked to the end of so august a line.
For never did as yet a house at once
Produce the demigod or e'en the monster.
'Tis only the long line of good or wicked
Brings forth at last to the astounded world
Its joy or terror. Atreus and Thyestes,
After their father's death command the city,
Ruling in common. Long their concord could
Not last. Thyestes soon incestuously
His brother's bed dishonors. Atreus drives him
Revengeful from his realm. Insidiously

Thyestes, meditating bloody deed,
Had long ago purloinéd from his brother
A son, and fondly reared him as his own.
His heart he fills with fury and revenge,
And sends him to the royal city, there
To slay his sire in his supposed uncle.
The king, discovering the youth's intention,
Doth punish fearfully the assassin sent,
Weening to kill the son of his own brother.
Too late he learns, who tortured dies before
His drunken eyes; and from his heart to purge
All feelings of revenge, he secretly
Contrives unheard of deed. He seems composed;
Indifferent and reconciled; allures
Back to his realm the brother and his sons.
Then seizing both the boys, he slaughters them,
And at the banquet treats the unconscious sire
To the revolting viands foully served.
And when Thyestes, sated by his flesh,
Is overcome by sudden melancholy,

And, asking for his children, seems to hear
Already, at the door of the wide hall,
The step and voice of both his darling boys,
Then Atreus grinningly throws down before
him

Both head and feet of murdered innocence.
Thou shuddering turn'st away thy face, O king.
The sun too thus his countenance averted,
His chariot bright left its eternal path.
These then are of thy priestess' the progenitors.
Yet many an unhappy fate of men,
And many deeds of a perverted mind
Night covers with its heavy wings, and lets
Us only see the twilight dim and frightful.

THOAS.

Hide them in silence too. No more of such
Abominations now. Tell, by what wonder
Thou didst descend from such a savage race.

IPHIGENIA.

Of Atreus, eldest son was Agamemnon.
He is my father. Truly I may say it :
In him the model of a perfect man
I saw and honored from my earliest years.
Me Clytemnestra bore to him, the firstling
Of love ; Electra next. The king enjoyed
A peaceful reign. The house of Tantalus
At last obtained the long-desired repose.
A son was wanting yet to crown the wishes
Of both the parents. Scarce was this fulfilled,
As now Orestes grew up with us sisters—
The darling child—when new misfortunes still
The house in its security surprised.
The fame has doubtless reached you of the war,
Which, to avenge the fairest woman's rape,
The entire might of all the Grecian princes
Collected round the walls of Troy. But whether
They won the town and their revengeful aims

Accomplished, I never heard. My father
The Grecian army led. In vain they waited
For favorable winds in Aulis; for,
Diana, angry with their leader, kept
The impatient mariners back, demanding sternly
By Calchas' mouth the king's own eldest daughter.

They lured me with my mother to the camp;
They dragged me to the altar, to devote
This head to the divinity. She was
Appeased' and wanted not my blood. Deliver-
ing

She hid me in the cloud; and in this temple
I first again recovered from my swoon.
I am herself, am Iphigenia,
Grandchild of Atreus, Agamemnon's daughter,
Diana's chosen one, who speaks with thee.

THOAS.

More confidence I give not to the princess,
And preference, than to the unknown virgin.

My first proposal I would now renew,
Come, follow me and share whate'er I have. ←

IPHIGENIA.

How can I venture such a step, O king?
Has not the goddess, who delivered me,
The only claim to my devoted life?
She has selected this asylum for me,
And she preserves me to a father, whom
Enough by this deception she has punished—
To be forsooth the joy of his old age.
Perhaps my glad return is near at hand;
And could I, heedless of her ways, perchance,
Have kept myself concealed here, 'gainst her
will?
I asked a sign, if I were to remain.

THOAS.

The sign is, that thou still abidest here.
Do not too anxiously such pretext seek;

In vain are many words, which but refuse ;
The other hears the *no* before the rest.

IPHIGENIA.

These are not words invented to deceive ;
I have unveiled my inmost heart to thee.
Conceiv'st thou not thyself, how I must long
With anxious constant yearnings, my dear
father,

My mother, brother, sister to embrace ?—
That in those ancient halls, where mourning
grief

My name may often softly whisper still,
Exulting joy, as for a new-born babe,
Might twine the festal wreath 'round every
column.

Oh, couldst thou send me thither on swift ships !
Thou wouldst impart new life to me and all.

THOAS.

Return then ! Do the bidding of thy heart,
And close thy ear to every good advice—
The voice of reason. Be a woman wholly,
And yield to impulse, which, with force un-
bridled,
Will seizing sweep thee onward in its course,
When some desire is burning in their bosom,
No sacred tie will keep them from the tempter,
Who from the long-tried, faithful arms away
Of father or of consort can entice them.
But if this glow is silent in their breast,
In vain then will Persuasion's golden tongue,
With loving, potent sway attempt to move them.

IPHIGENIA.

Remember now, O king, thy noble word !
Wilt thou return my confidence thus ? Surely
Thou didst appear prepared for any answer.

THOAS.

For the unhopèd for I was not prepared.
But this I might expect. Did I not know,
That with a woman I would have to deal?

IPHIGENIA.

Do not, O king, reproach our feeble sex.
Not glorious, like yours, but still not mean
Are woman's weapons, nor contemptible.
Believe me, that in this I e'en excel thee;
I know thy welfare better e'en than thou.
A stranger to thyself and me, thou fanciest
A closer bond might happily unite us.
Full of good cheer and full of kind intentions,
Thou urgest me to yield and to comply.
But here I thank the heavenly gods, that they
Vouchsafed me firmness not to give consent
To an alliance *they* could not approve.

THOAS.

No god has said this; thine own heart hath
spoken.

IPHIGENIA.

They only speak to us through our hearts.

THOAS.

And have not I the right to hear them also?

IPHIGENIA.

Thy storm of passion drowns the gentle whisper.

THOAS.

And can forsooth the priestess only hear it?

IPHIGENIA.

The prince above all others should obey it.

THOAS.

Thy sacred charge, thy right hereditary
To Jove's board bring thee nearer to the gods,
Than us and other barbarous sons of earth.

IPHIGENIA.

Must I thus rue the confidence extorted ?

THOAS.

I am a man ; 'tis better here to end.
Be this my last reply. Remain thou priestess,
To serve the goddess, that elected thee ;
But may Diana pardon me, that I
Unjustly and with self-reproaches,
Her ancient sacrifices have withheld her.
No stranger safely may approach our shore ;
A certain doom from ancient times awaits him.
Thou only hast, from kind humanity,
In which I now a tender daughter's love

And now the affection of my future bride
Rejoiced to see, with chains of sweet enchant-
ment

Held me in strange forgetfulness of duty.
My senses thou hast lulled into repose,
The murmurs of my people I perceived not ;
And now they louder charge me with the guilt
Of my son's premature and cruel death.
On thine account no longer can I check
The impatient multitude demanding victims.

IPHIGENIA.

I never asked it on my own account.
He doth mistake the heavenly deities
Who deems them fond of blood, imputing falsely
To them his own most barbarous attributes.
Did not the goddess wrest me from the priest ?
She chose my service rather than my death.

THOAS.

It is not meet for us, a sacred custom
According to the uncertain light of reason
And our own mind to interpret and explain.
Do thou thy duty, I will mine perform.
Two strangers, which in caves along our coast
Were found concealed, who to my land can bring
No benefit, are now within my power.
With these the goddess may accept anew
Her first and proper, long-missed sacrifice!
I'll send them hither; and thou know'st thy
office.

FOURTH SCENE.IPHIGENIA. (*Alone.*)

540 Thou hast clouds, delivering deity,
Therein to hide those unjustly pursued,
And on winds to bear them away from

Destiny's iron hands, o'er the ocean,
Over the earth's most distant expanse,
And wherever thy pleasure may prompt thee.
Wise art thou, and beholdest the future,
Even the past is not over to thy mind ;
And thy look is fixed on thy minions,
As thy light, the life of our nights here,
Rules with serene sway over earth's bosom. —
Oh, do thou keep from blood my hands pure ;
Never can rest or a blessing attend it.
And the shade of whom accident murdered
Grimly lurks for the sad and reluctant
Criminal's evil hour to torment him.
For the gods take highest delight in
The good and wide-spreading races of mortals,
And they prolong his fugacious existence
Gladly to man ; would willingly grant him
Leave, for a while, to share their eternal
Heaven's perpetual, blissful fruition.

SECOND ACT.

FIRST SCENE.

ORESTES.—PYLADES.

ORESTES.

It is the way of death, on which we enter ;
At every step my soul becomes more pensive.
When I besought Apollo, to remove
The hideous escort of the avenging spirits
From near my side, he seemed, with certain
words,
Godlike, full of encouragement to promise
Help and deliverance at the sacred shrine
Of his much-loved sister, ruling Tauris.
And now it comes to pass that all my anguish

Is to be ended here completely with my life.
How willingly can I, to whom a god
The heart compresses and the senses turns,
Renounce the fair light of the sun for ever !
And if the sons of Atreus can in battle
Ne'er win a glorious wreath-encircled end ;
If I, like my progenitors, like my father,
Must bleed, the victim of disgraceful death :
So be it ! better here before the altar
Than in the accursed corner, where the assassin
Of near alliance lays his snares in secret.
Till then leave me at rest, ye infernal spirits,
Who scenting track, like furious dogs unleashed,
The blood that thickly falls beneath my steps,
And reeking mars the path I walk upon.
Leave me ; for I shall soon descend to you ;
The light of day shall see nor you, nor me.
This fair green carpet of the earth
Shall be no rendezvous for spectres. There
Below I'll find you ; there all dwell alike

By equal fate in languid night eternal.
Thee only, Pylades, thee of my guilt
And of my curse the innocent companion,
I grieve to take to yonder mournful land
So prematurely ! 'Tis thy life or death
Alone inspires me yet with hope or fear.

PYLADES.

I am not yet, Orestes, like thyself
Prepared to go to yonder realm of shades.
I meditate yet, through the entangled paths,
That seem to lead to black perpetual night,
To win for us a safe return to life.
I meditate not death, but think and hearken,
If not the gods for our delivering flight
Some way unhop'd for or device might send us.
Death, whether feared or unfeared always comes
Inevitably. When the priestess shall
Already raise her consecrating hand,
To cut our locks ; e'en then our mutual safety

Shall be my only thought still. Raise thy soul
Above this foul despair. Doubting thou only
The danger dost accelerate. Apollo
This word hath pledged us: In his sister's temple
Help, consolation and a safe return await thee.
The words of deities are not ambiguous,
As man in his dejection would regard them.

ORESTES.

The dark and gloomy veil of life my mother
Already spread around my infant head,
And thus the image of my noble father
I grew up; and my silent look was ever
To her and paramour a keen reproach.
How often, when Electra, my good sister,
Sat in the deep hall mute before the fire,
Did I afflicted cling to her dear knees,
And gaze at her, how bitterly she wept,
With staring look. Then she would many a tale
Relate of our illustrious sire. How much

I longed to see him and to be with him ;
I wished myself at Troy now, him now here.
The day arrived ——

PYLADES.

Oh let of that sad hour
Infernal spirits hold nocturnal converse,
Let reminiscences of happier days
Give us new strength for fresh heroic course.
The gods have need of many a noble man
For their great service here on our wide earth.
On thee, too, they have counted yet ; they gave
Thee not as escort to thy father, when he
Unwillingly to Orcus' shades descended.

ORESTES.

Would I had seized him by his skirt, and thither
Accompanied !

PYLADES.

Thus have they, who preserved thee,
For *me* provided too ; for what I should be,

If thou wert not, is past my comprehending,
Since I, from tender childhood up, with thee
And for thee only lived and life desired.

ORESTES.

✓ Recall me not those days of sunniest joy,
When in your house I found a free abode,
And when thy noble sire with fond affection
The tender and half-withered blossom nurtured;
Where thou, my ever blithe and gay companion,
Like some light parti-colored butterfly
Around a dark-hued flower—every day
Didst dance about me with new life inspired;
When sportingly thou didst infuse thy mirth
Into my soul, that I, of my distress
Forgetful, by thy ardor hurried on,
Could revel with thee in the sports of youth.

PYLADES.

My life did not begin until I loved thee.

ORESTES.

Say : my distress began, and thou say'st truly.
This is the anguish of my destiny,
That I, like some infected fugitive,
Bear secret pain and death within my breast ;
So that where'er I tread the healthiest place,
Quite soon around me the most blooming faces
Betray the painful mark of lingering death.

PYLADES.

The first were I to die such painful death,
Orestes, if thy breath were poisonous.
Am I not still of courage full and pleasure ?
And love and pleasure are the aërial wings
To lofty deeds.

ORESTES.

To lofty deeds ? Yes truly
I know the time, when we to them looked forward !
When we together often in the chase

Through hill and valley ran, expecting one day,
In chest and fist our lofty grandsire's match,
With club and sword the monster thus to chase,
Thus to pursue the robber in swift course ;
And when at evening on the distant shore,
We calmly sat, on one another leaning,
The wavelets sporting closely 'neath our feet,
And the wide world so open lay before us ;
Then one of us would sometimes grasp the
sword,
And future exploits like the countless stars
Around us crowded from the abyss of night.

PYLADES.

The work is infinite, which to accomplish
The soul is urged. Each deed we would at once
Perform as great as it becomes and waxes,
When for long years through lands and genera-
tions
The poet's mouth exaggerating rolls it.

The deeds of our fathers sound so fair,
When resting in the quiet shades of even,
The young man quaffs them with the harp's
 deep tones ;

And what we do is, as it was with them,
Of imperfections full, and toil and pain !
Thus we are chasing that which flees from us,
And of the way we tread take little note,
And scarcely heed our fathers' steps beside us,
And traces of their earthly pilgrimage.
Their shadows we are ever hieing after,
Which godlike at the distant welkin's bound
The mountain's summit crown on golden clouds.
I think not much of him, who only aims,
How he may win the crowd's applause and
 favor.

Still, do thou thank the gods, oh youth, that they
So soon in life have done so much for thee.

ORESTES.

If they vouchsafe to man some joyous deed,
That he misfortune from his friend averts,
His realm enlarges or its bound secures,
If ancient foes fall or are put to flight;
Let him be grateful! For a god on him
Life's first and highest pleasure hath bestowed.
Me they have chosen executioner;
To murder my yet venerated mother,
And shamefully avenging this foul deed,
By their own nod have ruined me. Believe me,
They levelled at the house of Tantalus,
And I, its last son, shall not guiltless perish,
Nor honorably even.

PYLADES.

The gods avenge not
The father's crime upon his guiltless son,
Each one, or good or bad, receives
His own reward together with his deeds;
His parents' blessing not their curse he inherits.

ORESTES.

Methinks their blessing does not lead us hither.

PYLADES.

The will, at least, of the celestial gods.

ORESTES.

It is their will, then, that would ruin us.

PYLADES.

Do what they bid thee and await the issue.
If thou his sister to Apollo bring'st,
And both shall dwell united there at Delphi,
Adoréd by a noble-minded people,
Then will the exalted pair for this thy deed
Be gracious to thee, and will from the hands
Of these infernal sisters rescue thee.
E'en now they dare not near this sacred grove.

ORESTES.

Then I shall have at least a quiet death.

PYLADES.

I think quite otherwise, and not unskilful
Have I already past with future things
United and expounded in my heart.
This great work in the council of the gods
Perchance already is mature. Diana
From this unhallowed coast of barbarous tribes,
And from their bloody rites desires to part.
We were elected for this noble purpose ;
On us it is imposed ; and strange enough
We are compelled here at the very porch.

ORESTES.

With admirable skill thou link'st together
The council of the gods and thine own wishes.

PYLADES.

✕ And what is human prudence worth, unless
It heedful listens to a higher will ?
A god calls to some arduous enterprise

The noble man, who greatly sinned, and asks
Of him, what seems impossible to accomplish.
The hero conquers, and atoning serves
The gods both and the world, that worships
him.

ORESTES.

If I am destined still to live and act,
Then may a god take from my heavy brow
That giddiness, which on the slippery path,
Besprinkled by a mother's blood, doth hurry
Me to the realms of Hades. May he dry
Propitiously the spring, that from her wounds
For ever bubbling forth, polluting stains me.

PYLADES.

Wait but more calmly! Thou thyself augmentest
The evil and assum'st the part of Furies.
Keep still, and let me meditate! The deed
At last may need united efforts; then

I'll summon thee, and both of us proceed
With boldness resolute to accomplish it.

ORESTES.

I hear Ulysses speak.

PYLADES.

Deride me not.
Each man must for himself select some hero,
Whom in his struggle for Olympus' glory
He imitates. I candidly confess it:
Sagacity and craft seem no disgrace to me
In one, who lives for deeds of noble valor.

ORESTES.

It is the brave and upright man I honor.

PYLADES.

'Tis therefore I have not consulted thee ;
Already I have acted. From our spies
I have elicited much to our purpose.

I know a stranger (godlike maiden) holds
That foul and bloody law in prudent check.
A pure heart, sweet incense and supplication
She offers to the gods. The angelic being
Is highly lauded. Men believe, that she
Descended from the race of Amazons,
And fled, a greater evil to avoid.

ORESTES.

Methinks her glorious empire lost its power
In presence of the culprit, whom a curse
Pursues and covers like far-spreading night.
That pious thirst for blood will loose again
The old custom from its fetters, to destroy us.
The king's ferocious mind will prove our bane;
A woman cannot save us from his anger.

PYLADES.

How fortunate, she is a woman. For,
A man, the best e'en, can adapt his mind
To barbarous acts, and make at last a law

Of that, which once he had abhorred and fled ;
He's changed by custom and made obdurate.
But woman firmly to the purpose clings,
She once adopted ; and thou canst rely
On her for good or ill more safely. Still !
She comes ; leave us alone. I must not tell her
Our names directly, nor without reserve
Our destiny intrust to her. Go thou ;
I'll see thee yet, before she speaks with thee.

SECOND SCENE.

IPHIGENIA.—PYLADES.

IPHIGENIA.

O stranger, tell us whence thou art and com'st !
It seems to me, that rather to a Grecian
Than to a Scythian I should compare thee.

(Releases him from his chains.)

The liberty I give thee now is dangerous ;
Oh, may the gods avert what threatens thee !

PYLADES.

O, sweetest voice, much welcome, charming
sound

Of native language in a distant land !
The mountains blue of my paternal harbor
I see, a prisoner, again before my eyes,
And bid them welcome. Let this joy of mine
Assure thee, that I also am a Grecian !
This rapturous moment caused me to forget
How much I need thy help ; amazed I stood
To contemplate this glorious spectacle.
Unless some destiny hath sealed thy lips,
Then tell me, from what tribe of our dear land
Thou reckonest thy godlike origin.

IPHIGENIA.

The priestess by the deity herself
Elected and made sacred, speaks with thee.
Let this suffice thee ; tell me, who art thou ?
And what unhappy destiny controlling

Hath brought thee hither with thy sad companion ?

PYLADES.

I readily can tell thee what an evil
With onerous society pursues us.
Oh, that thou couldst as easily impart
The cheerful look of hope, thou godlike maiden !
We come from Crete, Adrastus is our sire,
I am the youngest, Cephalus by name,
And he Laodamas, the eldest born.
Between us two there grew up rough and wild
Another brother, marring e'en in sports
The joy and harmony of our first youth.
We quietly obeyed our mother's words,
As long as Troy engaged our father's might ;
When he returned, however, rich in spoils,
And shortly after died, contention soon
About their kingdom and inheritance
Divided in fierce feuds the ambitious brothers,

I sided with the eldest ; and he slew
His brother. Tò avenge the bloody crime,
The Fury drives him giddily about.
Still, to this shore the Delphian god, Apollo,
Doth send, us and with hopes anew inspire.
Here in his sister's temple did he bid us
Await the blessed arm of our deliverance.
But we are prisoners now and hither brought,
For sacrifice presented here. Thou know'st it.

IPHIGENIA.

Is Troy no more ? Dear sir, assure me of it.

PYLADES.

It lies. Assure thou us of our deliverance !
Accelerate the assistance which a god
Hath promised us. Commiserate my brother.
O tell him soon some kind and soothing word ;
Yet spare him, if thou ever speak'st with him,
This I sincerely beg : for joy and sorrow,
In memory reproduced, quite easily

His inmost heart affect and lacerate.
A feverish delirium attacks him,
And his soul, free and beautiful, is given
Up to the ruthless Furies as a prey.

IPHIGENIA.

Great as is thy misfortune, I conjure thee,
Forget it, till my wish is satisfied.

PYLADES.

The lofty city, which for ten long years
The entire forces of all Greece resisted,
Lies now in ashes, never more to rise.
Yet many a grave of our most valiant warriors
Makes us remember that barbarian coast.
Achilles rests there with his dearest friend.

IPHIGENIA.

Then are ye godlike forms in ruins too !

PYLADES.

And Palamedes, Ajax Telamon,
They neither saw their natal sky again.

IPHIGENIA.

He speaks not of my father, names him not
Among the slain. Yes! He must be alive!
I shall behold him yet! Hope still, my heart!

PYLADES.

But blessed are the thousands all, that died
The sweetly bitter death by enemy's hands!
For, frightful desolation and sad end
A hostile and incenséd god prepared,
Instead of triumph, to the returning chiefs.
Or does perchance the voice of men not reach
thee?

Far as it goes, it spreads about the fame
Of deeds unheard-of, that have taken place.
Or is the misery which Mycenae's halls

Now fills with lamentation ever new,
A secret to thee? Clytemnestra hath
Surprised her husband—aided by Ægisthus—
And slain him on the day of his return!
Yes, thou reverest this our royal house!
I see it, how thy breast in vain attempts
This unexpected monstrous word to vanquish.
Art thou the daughter of a friend, perchance?
Or born contiguously in the city?
Conceal it not; account it not a blame,
That such abominations I first mention.

IPHIGENIA.

Tell me, how was the heavy crime accom-
plished?

PYLADES.

When, on the day of his return, the king
Came from the bath refreshed, and quietly
His garment asked from Clytemnestra's hand,

The monstrous woman threw upon his shoulders
And round his head, a many-folded cloak
Of artful and entangling tissue woven ;
And while he vainly strove to extricate
Himself, as from a net, Ægisthus killed him,
That traitorous seducer ; and thus shrouded,
The powerful prince descended to the dead.

IPHIGENIA.

And what reward, pray, did the accomplice win ?

PYLADES.

A kingdom and a bed already his.

IPHIGENIA.

And this base deed was prompted by vile lust ?

PYLADES.

And feeling of an ancient, deep revenge.

IPHIGENIA.

How had she been offended by the king ?

PYLADES.

With heavy deed, which, if excuse there be
Of murder, would from guilt exonerate her.
To Aulis he allured her, and there brought,
When some divinity with boisterous winds
Opposed the voyage of the Grecian army,
His eldest daughter, Iphigenia,
Before Diana's altar, where she fell
A victim bleeding for the army's safety.
This, it is said, hath such intense aversion
Implanted in her heart, that she the wooing
Accepted of Ægisthus, and her husband
Herself entangled in destruction's net.

IPHIGENIA.

It is enough. I'll see thee soon again.

PYLADES.

By this fate of our royal house she seems
Most deeply moved. Whoever she may be,

Surely she must have known the king himself,
Be of some noble house, was hither sold
For our good luck. Be quiet now, dear heart,
And let us cheerfully and firmly steer
Towards the twinkling star of hope before us.

THIRD ACT.

FIRST SCENE.

IPHIGENIA.—ORESTES.

IPHIGENIA.

Unhappy man, I loose thy fetters now—
An earnest of more painful destiny.
The freedom, which the sanctuary grants,
Is like the last bright ray of life, that quivers
In the expiring eye—death's harbinger,
I neither can nor dare yet tell myself
That thou art wholly lost! How could I doom
 you
With murderous hand to die before the altar?
No one, whoe'er he be, shall touch your head,
As long as I am here Diana's priestess.

Yet, if I hesitate to do my duty,
As the incenséd king demands it sternly,
Then will he choose as my successor here
One of my maidens. Then I may assist
Your purposes with ardent wishes only.
Oh my dear countryman ! The humblest slave
That brushed the hearth of our paternal gods,
Is dear to us in foreign lands and welcome :
How shall I worthily with joy and blessings
Receive you, who the image of the heroes,
Whom I had learned to honor from my parents,
Have brought to me, my inmost heart delight-
ing
With new fair hopes and flattering prospects
bright !

ORESTES.

Concealest thou thy name and origin
With wise intent, or may I dare to ask,
Who like some heavenly deity here meets me ?

IPHIGENIA.

Thou shalt yet know me. First of all, now tell,
What I but half could learn of thy good brother:
The end of those, whom after their return
From Troy a dire and unexpected fate
Gave mute reception at their mansion's threshold.
'Tis true I landed on this strand when young ;
Still I remember yet the timid look,
Which I with wonder and anxiety
On those brave heroes cast. They marched to
battle,
As if Olympus had its golden portals
Thrown open, and to Ilion's terror sent
The illustrious forms of gray antiquity ;
And glorious before all was Agamemnon !
O tell me ! Fell he entering his house,
By his own consort's and Ægisthus' malice ?

ORESTES.

Thou say'st it.

IPHIGENIA.

Woe to thee, unblessed Mycenæ !

Thus the Tantalidæ have curse on curse,
With full hands scattered all around them !
And like rank weeds, shaking their hideous
heads

And multiplying seed innumerable,
To children's children close-related murderers
For mutual eternal rage engendered !
Unveil to me, what of thy brother's speech
The sudden darkness of my fright hath hidden.
How did the last son of the illustrious race,
The fair child, destined to become hereafter
His sire's avenger—how did on that day
Of blood Orestes fare ? Did a like fate
Involve him in Avernus' meshes then ?
Did he escape alive, and lives Electra ?

ORESTES.

They both live.

IPHIGENIA.

Golden sun, oh lend me now
Thy fairest rays, and lay them as my offering
Before Jove's throne! For I am poor and mute.

ORESTES.

If thou by ties of hospitality,
Or nearer still, art to this royal house
Allied, as thy great joy betrays to me,
Then check thy heart and hold it firmly!
For insupportable to gladdened minds
Must prove a steep relapse to former anguish.
Thou know'st but Agamemnon's death, I see.

IPHIGENIA.

And may not this intelligence suffice?

ORESTES.

Thou know'st but half of the abomination.

IPHIGENIA.

What fear I yet? Orestes lives, Electra.

ORESTES.

And fear'st thou not for Clytemnestra's safety ?

IPHIGENIA.

Her neither hope nor terror can deliver.

ORESTES.

She too departed from the land of hope.

IPHIGENIA.

Did she in rueful rage shed her own blood ?

ORESTES.

No, still her own blood dealt the mortal blow.

IPHIGENIA.

Explain thyself more clearly, solve my doubts.

Uncertainty flaps with its sable wings

In thousand circles round my anxious head.

ORESTES.

Have then the gods elected me to bear

The message of a deed, which I so gladly

Into the dismal, soundless Tartarus
Of night would bury ? Quite against my will
Thy beauteous mouth compels me ; but it may
Demand e'en painful duties and obtain them.
The day her father fell, Electra hid
Delivering her brother. Strophius,
His uncle, willingly received the boy,
And brought him up with his own son,
Who, Pylades by name, by sweetest ties
Of friendship was united to his cousin.
As they grew up, there sprang up in their soul
A burning thirst, the murder of the king
To avenge. In strange attire and unexpected
They reach Mycenæ, feigning to have brought
The mournful message of Orestes' death,
Together with his ashes. Well the queen
Received them both. They enter her own
house.

Orestes is discovered by Electra.

She kindles in him the revengeful flame

Which in the sacred presence of the mother
Had burned but feebly. She leads him softly
To that dread place where fell their father ;
Where still a slight remaining stain of blood—
So impiously shed—the oft-scoured floor
With faint and sad streaks ominously dyed.
With fiery eloquence she then depicted
Each circumstance of their accursed deed,
Her life in thralldom miserably spent,
The lucky traitor's wanton insolence,
The dangers then awaiting both of them
From their own mother, now become estranged.
She forced him then to seize that ancient steel,
Which in the house of Tantalus already
Had raged so fiercely and destructively,
And Clytemnestra fell, slain by her son.

IPHIGENIA.

Immortal deities, who spend pure days
Of bliss on never-fading clouds enthroned,

Have ye for this alone so many a year
Secluded me from men, kept me so close
By your own side, this childlike occupation
Of feeding here the sacred fire's red glow
To me intrusted, and my longing soul
In everlasting pious purity
Flame-like drawn upward to your blessed abodes,
That I the horrors of my house hereafter
Should feel more keenly?—Speak to me, I pray,
Of the unhappy one! Speak of Orestes!

ORESTES.

O could his death be subject of discourse!
As if fermenting from her reeking blood,
The mother's ghost arose,
Calling unto Night's ancient daughters thus:
"Let not the matricide escape your grasp!
Pursue the culprit, doomed to be your prey!"
They listen to the voice, their hollow gaze

Darts with an eagle's greediness around.
In their dark caverns they bestir themselves ;
Doubt and Repentance, their companions grim,
Come slinking slowly from their hiding-place.
The smoke from Acheron ascends before them ;
And in its cloudy circles rolls about
The eternal Contemplation of the Past
Around the guilty head, embarrassing.
And they, entitled to destroy, now tread
The fair soil of this God-sown earth again,
From which an ancient curse had banished them.
Their nimble foot pursues the fugitive ;
They only give repose to terrify anew.

IPHIGENIA.

Unhappy man, thou art in equal plight,
And feel'st what he, poor exile, must endure !

ORESTES.

What say'st thou? And what deem'st thou
equal plight?

IPHIGENIA.

The curse of fratricide oppresses thee, as him;
Already has thy youngest brother told me.

ORESTES.

I cannot bear that thou, magnanimous soul,
Shouldst be deluded by deceitful words.
A stranger weaves, in cunning skilled, for strangers,
Ingeniously a tissue of deceit,
To involve their feet in snares; between us two
Let there be truth!
I am Orestes! This my guilty head
Is sinking towards the pit, and longs for death;
In any form, let it be welcome to me!
Whoe'er thou art, I wish thee safe return,
And to my friend; for me I wish it not.

Thou seem'st to linger here against thy will ;
 Devise some means for flight and leave me here.
 May from the rock my body tumble lifeless !
 And let my blood flow reeking to the sea,
 And curses heap upon this barbarous shore !
 Go ye, at home, in the fair land of Greece,
 To re-commence a new and joyous life !

[He turns
 away]

IPHIGENIA.

So thou descend'st at last to me, Fulfilment,
 Thou fairest daughter of the Supreme Sire !
 How vast thine image stands before my eyes !
 My ken can scarcely reach up to thy hands,
 Which, crowned with fruit and wreaths of plenty,
 Bring down to us the treasures of Olympus.
 As kings are known by large munificence
 Of gifts—for insignificant to them must seem
 What would be wealth to thousands—thus ye
 gods
 Are known, too, by the choicest presents, long

And wisely kept in store, for whom ye favor.
For ye alone know what is best for us,
Behold the future's far-extending realm,
When every evening's starry veil or nebulous
Our prospect intercepts. Ye calmly hear
Our earnest prayer, which filially sues
For speedy answer ; but your cautious hand
Plucks unripe ne'er the golden fruit of heaven.
Woe be to him, who by bold importunity
Extorting from you hurtful food, consumes it
To his own ruin. Let this long-expected
Yet scarcely realized delight not vainly
And thrice more painfully pass by before me,
The shade of some departed friend resembling.

ORESTES. (*Approaches nearer to her.*)

If thou invok'st the gods for thee and Pylades,
Do not, I pray thee, name my name with yours ;
Thou canst not save the culprit by thy plea ;
Thou only shar'st his curse and misery.

IPHIGENIA.

My destiny is firmly linked to thine.

ORESTES.

May Heaven forefend ! Alone and unattended
Let me descend below. Wert thou to screen
My guilty head e'en with thy sacred veil,
Thou couldst not hide it from those sleepless
eyes.

Thy presence, maiden, can but chase aside
The direful brood, not banish them for ever. *for ever*
They venture not with impious brazen foot
To tread the hallowed ground of this thy grove ;
Yet at a distance here and there I hear
Their hellish laughter terrible. Thus wolves
Prowl howling round the tree, on which some
wanderer

Sought refuge. There in yonder plain they rest
Encamped ; and soon as I forsake this grove,
Shaking their snake-entwined head they rise,

On all sides raising billowing clouds of dust,
And drive before them their devoted prey.

IPHIGENIA.

Canst thou, Orestes, hear a friendly word ?

ORESTES.

Reserve it for a friend of the Celestials.

IPHIGENIA.

They give thee now renewed light and hope.

ORESTES.

Through clouds of smoke I see the lurid Styx,
Dimly illumining my path to hell.

IPHIGENIA.

Dost thou Electra call thy only sister ?

ORESTES.

Her only knew I ; for a happy fate,
That seemed to us so terrible, removed betimes

The eldest from the misery of our house.
Oh cease thy questions, lest thou too become
The associate of the avenging deities,
Who blow the soothing ashes from my soul
Maliciously, nor suffer the last embers
Of our lost house's frightful conflagration
To die away within me. Shall this flame,
Re-kindled wilfully, and fed anew
With Stygian sulphur from a fury's hand,
Burn in my soul with torments everlasting?

IPHIGENIA:

I bring sweet-odored incense for that flame,
Oh, let the breath of pure affection cool
Thy bosom's raging fire, softly waving.
My dear Orestes, canst thou not perceive
How the fell escort of the furies thus
Dried up the circling blood within thy veins?
Or doth some spell from hideous gorgon-head
Creep o'er thy limbs with petrifying power?

Oh, if the voice of matricidal blood
Calls down to hell with hollow ghastly sounds,
Shall not a loving sister's benediction
Bring from Olympus down the helping gods?

ORESTES.

They call! they call! Wilt thou too my destruction?
Is some avenging goddess hid in thee?
Who art thou, pray, whose voice so frightfully
Stirs up my inmost in its lowest depth?

IPHIGENIA.

The voice within thine inmost heart declares it:
Orestes, lo, thy sister Iphigenia!
I live still!

ORESTES.

Thou!

IPHIGENIA.

My brother !

ORESTES.

Away !

I tell thee, touch not these accursed locks !
A quenchless fire destructive emanates
From me, as from Creusa's bridal weeds.
Leave me ! for like brave Hercules I choose,
Unworthy wretch, a lonely death disgraceful.

IPHIGENIA.

Thou art not doomed to perish ; oh, could I
But hear one single tranquil word from thee !
Oh, solve my doubts, and make me sure
Of this my luck so long besought of Heaven.
A wheel of joy and anguish in my soul
Is whirling round. With shudder I recoil
From the approach of strangers ; but my brother
Draws forth my inmost soul to his embrace.

ORESTES.

Is this Lyæus' temple? Is the priestess
Inspired with sacred bacchanalian rage?

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, hear me! Look at me! Behold how gladly
My heart at last its long-closed portals opes
To this my present bliss, of all most precious
That life can offer me: to kiss the head
And with my arms, ere this to empty winds
Outspread, to clasp thee now in sweet embrace!
Oh, let me! Let me! Brighter ne'er doth
flow

From high Parnassus the perennial spring
From rock to rock the golden valley down,
Than now sweet joy wells from my heaving
heart,

And like a blessed sea encircles me around.

Orest! Orest! my brother!

ORESTES.

Enchanting nymph,

I trust thee not, nor heed thy flattery.
Diana sternly claims strict chastity,
And will avenge her desecrated fane.
Remove thy arm from my polluted breast !
If thou wouldst kindly save and love a youth,
And offer him the fairest mortal bliss,
Then let my friend enjoy this gracious boon,—
A worthier man than I. He roams about
On yonder rocky paths ; look after him,
Instruct *him* rather, and desist from me.

IPHIGENIA.

Peace, brother ! Know thy sister found again !
Call not this pure celestial joy of mine
A culpable and inconsiderate passion.
Ye gods ! remove th' illusion from his eyes,
Lest this our moment of the highest bliss
Make us but doubly wretched ! She is here,

Thy long-lost sister. From before the altar
The goddess snatched me, kindly saving me—
To her own sanctuary hither brought.
Thou art a prisoner, to the altar doomed,
And findest in the priestess thine own sister.

X

ORESTES.

Unhappy maid ! may then the all-seeing God
Be witness of our house's final doom !
Is not Electra here ? that also she
May perish here with us, and not prolong
Her life for heavier mishap and suffering.
Well, priestess ! I will follow to the altar ;
For fratricide is our ancestral custom,
From age to age descended. Gods, I thank ye,
That without offspring to extirpate me
Ye have concluded !—Be advised by me :
Love not the sun too much, nor yet the stars ;
Come follow me down to the realms of night !
As dragons in the infernal pool engendered,

Devour in fiercest strife congenerous brood,
So this mad family destroys itself ;
Come childless too, and guiltless down with me !
Thou look'st at me with pitying eye. Desist !
With such look Clytemnestra sought
Refused access to her son's dure heart ;
Still his uplifted arm aimed at her breast.
The mother fell !—Rise up, reluctant ghost !
With serried front advance on me, ye furies !
Be present at this welcome spectacle,
The last, the direfullest, which ye prepare !
Not hate or vengeance whet their daggers here ;
The loving sister to this cursed deed
Is forced.—Weep not ! The guilt rests not on
thee.

Naught have I cherished from my earliest years
As I could cherish thee, dear sister, now ;
Ay, swing the steel, spare not the stroke,
Tear now this bosom, and let flow
The seething streams of fury there enclosed !

(He sinks exhausted.)

IPHIGENIA.

Alone I cannot bear this bliss and misery.

Where art thou, Pylades, kind friend and brother?

Where, dearest man, can I now find thy aid?

(Exit, looking after Pylades.)

SECOND SCENE.

ORESTES.

(Recovers from his stupefaction and rises.)

Once more! Oh reach me from the flood of
Lethe

The last cool cup of the reviving draught!

Soon shall my life's convulsive struggle be

Washed from my bosom; noiseless shall my
spirit,

Surrendered to the source of sweet oblivion,
Descend to you, ye shades, in mists eternal.
The wandering outcast son of earth meets gladly
Among your placid seats, sweet, blest repose.
What whisperings do I hear in yonder boughs,
What hurtling sound from yonder twilight issues?
They come already the new guest to see !
Who is that band, which, like some princely
house

In festive hall assembled, thus rejoices ?
Men, women, young and old, together walk
In peaceful harmony ; the moving figures,
Each other close resembling, godlike seem !
'Tis so ! there are my ancestors ! Thyestes
With Atreus walks in converse intimate ;
The boys in joyous sports around them run.
And is there no more enmity between ye ?
Did vengeance vanish with the light of life ?
Then am I welcome too ; I also may
With this august procession mingle now.

Welcome, my fathers ! Orestes greets ye,
Last of your race's regal scions,
What ye have sown once he now reaps :
Laden with curses he hither descended ;
But every burden is lighter here.
Receive, oh receive him into your circle !
Thee, Atreus, I honor, thee too, Thyestes :
Here we are all from enmity free.—
Show me my father, whom I once only
Beheld in my life ! Art thou it, my father ?
Lead'st thou my mother so fair by thy side ?
Dares Clytemnestra her hand thee to reach ?
Then may Orestes too venture approach,
May too accost her : Lo, mother, thy son !
Lo here thy son ! and bid him a welcome.
On earth was ever in our house
Greeting the certain signal of murder,
And the high race of ancient Tantalus
Hath festive joy beyond the night of death.
Ye call : Be welcome ! And receive me too !

O lead me then to my ancestral sire !
Where is the sire, that I may see him,
That sacred head, the much-revered,
That with the gods sat in council high ?
Ye seem to stay, and to turn your face :
What is this ? Suffers the hero divine ?
Aye me ! The powers omnipotent
With brazen chains have riveted fast
To ruthless torments the hero's breast.

THIRD SCENE.

ORESTES.—IPHIGENIA.—PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Are ye too now descended to the shades ?
I greet thee, sister ! Yet Electra's wanting ;
May quickly some kind god, with gentle shaft
Despatching, send her also down to us.

Thy lot, poor friend, I must commiserate !
Come, come along with me to Pluto's throne
To greet the host, as guests of new arrival.

IPHIGENIA.

Twin-deities, who o'er heaven's wide expanse
Lead up by day and night to mortal men
The rosy light, but to departed shades
None can impart, with friendly aid now save us !
Thou lov'st, Diana, thy fair brother more
Than aught else earth or heaven can offer thee,
And turn'st thy virgin countenance serene
Towards his eternal splendor longingly.
Oh suffer not my late-found only brother
To rage in frenzy's dark abysses lost !
And if thy will, which kept me here concealed,
Is now accomplished, wilt thou not through him
To me, through me to him, give gracious help ?
Then loose him from the fetters of that curse,
Lest the dear time of our deliverance vanish.

PYLADES.

Dost thou not know us and this sacred grove,
This rosy light, that shines not to the dead,
And feel'st thou not thy sister's arm and friend's,
Which grasp thee firmly yet, still living? Seize,
Oh seize our hand; we are not empty shades.
Mark now my word! Attend! and all thy
strength
Now summon up! Each moment now is pre-
cious,
And our return depends on slender threads
Which, as would seem, a favoring Parca spins.

ORESTES. (*To Iphigenia.*)

Let for the first time now, with heart unfettered,
My bliss be pure and perfect in thine arms!
Ye gods, that march with tempest's flaming power
On lowering clouds, to rive them and consume,
And kindly stern the long-desired rain,
'Mid blasts of thunder and the howl of winds,

In torrents wild pour down upon the earth ;
Yet soon convert men's fearful expectation
To blessings, and their mute astonishment
To joyous look and loud exulting thanks ,
When in the drops of freshly quickened leaflets
The new sun eyes itself in thousand mirrors,
And Iris many-hued with gentle hand,
Parts the last cloud's gray veil benignantly ;
Oh let me also in my sister's arms
And on the bosom of my friend enjoy
And keep your boons with unfeigned gratitude.
The curse now dissipates ; my heart informs me.
The dire Eumenides depart, I hear them,
For Tartarus and close the brazen gates
With far-off thundering violence.
The earth exhales refreshing odors sweet,
Invites me to its far-extending plains,
New joys of life and lofty deeds to seek.

PYLADES.

Neglect the moment not, which measured flies !
The wind that swells our sail shall waft aloft
Our overflowing joy to high Olympus.
Come ! speedy resolution now is needful.

FOURTH ACT.

FIRST SCENE.

IPHIGENIA.

WHEN the Olympians
One of the sons of earth
Visit with dark perplexity,
And when they work out for him
From gladness to heavy sorrow,
From sorrow to merry gladness
Deeply afflicting transition ;
Then they raise up for him
In the city's confines,
Or on the distant sea-coast,
Secretly some kind friend,

So that in hours of need too
Help may be ready for him.
Oh kindly bless our Pylades, ye gods,
And all his plans for our deliverance !
He is the hero's youthful arm in battle,
The sparkling eye of gray-haired sires in council :
For his whole soul is tranquil, and conceals
The sacred inexhausted boon of peace,
And to the wandering fugitive he reaches
Advice and help from its unruffled depths.
He tore me from my brother, when I gazed
'Gain and again at him, nor could believe
This happiness my own, nor let him loose
From my embrace, not feeling in my joy
The danger's close proximity around us.
Now hie they seaward, their device to accomplish,
Where their swift ship well manned at anchor
rides
In a sequestered bay, their nod awaiting.
They have put cunning words into my mouth,

Have taught me what to answer to the king,
When for the bloody offering he sends
His stern behest. Alas, I well perceive
I must be guided by them, like a child ;
For I have never learned dissimulation,
Nor how to gain my cause by craft. Alas,
Alas, the falsehood ! For it eases not
The breast, like every other word
Veracious uttered ; it consoles us not,
But strikes with anguish him who forges it ;
And like a dart dischargéd, by some god
Diverted from its aim and turned, falls back
Upon the archer. Care on care flits through
My agitated breast. The fury seizes
Perhaps again my brother on the soil
Of this unhallowed shore with grim assault.
Are they perhaps detected ? Armed warriors
I hear, methinks, approach. 'Tis so !—A cou-
rier
Comes hither from the king with hurried step.

My heart heaves high, my soul is clouded o'er,
As I descry the countenance of the man,
Whom I am to deceive with glozing words.

SECOND SCENE.

IPHIGENIA.—ARKAS.

ARKAS.

Come, priestess, come, dispatch the sacrifice !
The king is present and the people wait.

IPHIGENIA.

I should obey my duty and thy nod,
Unless some unexpected obstacle
Prevented the success of its fulfilment.

ARKAS.

What is there that can stay the king's command ?

IPHIGENIA.

An accident, of which we are not master.

ARKAS.

Then tell me, that I quickly may announce it,
For he's resolved upon the death of both.

IPHIGENIA.

The gods have not resolved it yet.
The guilt rests on the eldest of these men
Of fratricidal blood, that he hath spilt.
The furies are pursuing now his path ;
E'en in our temple's inmost sanctuary
The evil seized him, and his impure presence
The holy place contaminated. Now
I hasten with my maidens to the sea,
In purging wave Diana's image laving,
Mysterious lustration to perform.
Let no one then disturb our mute procession !

ARKAS.

I will announce this new impediment
Straight forward to the king ; do not begin
The sacred task, until he has consented.

IPHIGENIA.

This is the business of the priestess only.

ARKAS.

Such rare occurrence must the king too know.

IPHIGENIA.

His counsel or command can alter nothing.

ARKAS.

Requests are often made ostensibly.

IPHIGENIA.

Urge not what is my duty to refuse.

ARKAS.

Refuse not what is good and beneficial.

IPHIGENIA.

I yield, if thou wilt hasten my commission.

ARKAS.

The message to the camp I'll quickly bring,
And quickly hither with his word return.
Oh could I bear him other tidings yet,
Which would dissolve our present troubles all :
Thou hast not listened to my faithful counsel.

IPHIGENIA.

What I could do, I willingly performed.'

ARKAS.

Thy mind may alter yet, in proper time.

IPHIGENIA.

That, once for all, is not in our power.

ARKAS.

Thou deem'st impossible what costs thee pain.

IPHIGENIA.

And thou, by wish deceived, regard'st it easy.

ARKAS.

And wilt thou venture all so coolly then ?

IPHIGENIA.

I've laid it in the hands of Deities.

ARKAS.

By human means alone they're wont to save.

IPHIGENIA.

It all depends upon a hint from them.

ARKAS.

- I tell thee, it is in thy hand alone.
'Tis only the king's irritated mind,
That causes bitter death to these your strangers.
The army long ago has weaned its mind
From this foul sacrifice and bloody service.
Nay, many a one, whom adverse destiny
To alien countries brought, hath felt himself
How godlike to the wandering fugitive,
On foreign borders driven about deserted,

A friendly human countenance appears.
Oh turn not from us, what thou canst perform !
So easily accomplished once begun !
For nowhere Clemency divine, which comes
From Heaven down in human form incarnate,
Builds up her kingdom faster, than where rude
And wild a people, full of power and courage,
Left to itself alone and anxious forecast,
Sustains the heavy cares of human life.

IPHIGENIA.

Do not thus agitate my soul, which thou
Canst never move according to thy wish.

ARKAS.

In proper season we spare neither effort,
Nor repetition of judicious words.

IPHIGENIA.

Thou giv'st me trouble and excitest pain ;
Both to no purpose ; therefore leave me now.

ARKAS.

This very pain I call to my assistance ;
It is a friend, advising us for good.

IPHIGENIA.

It lays hold on my soul with violence,
But my aversion it effaces not.

ARKAS.

And can a fair soul such aversion feel
Towards a boon, a noble man extends ?

IPHIGENIA.

Yes, if that noble man (what is not meet),
Instead of thanks, my person would acquire.

ARKAS.

Who feels no inclination, never lacks
Words for some plausible apology.
What here has happened, I will tell the king.

Oh, wouldst thou in thy soul enumerate
How generous his course hath ever been,
From thy first landing to the present day.

THIRD SCENE.

IPHIGENIA. (*Alone.*)

By this man's speech I feel all suddenly
My heart turned in my bosom at a time
Most inconvenient. I am terrified !
For as the tide, in rapid floods arising,
Doth surge o'er rocks half-buried in the sand
Along the shore ; thus streams of purest joy
My inmost soul o'erflowed ; for I held fast
Embracéd in my arms the Impossible.
It seemed as if that gentle cloud again
Would now encompass me, and from the earth
Raise me aloft, and lull me once again
Into that sleep, which the benignant goddess

Poured round my temples, when her powerful
arm

Delivering laid hold on me. My heart
Clung to my brother with resistless power.
His friend's advice alone I then consulted ;
My soul was only urged ahead to save them ;
And as from desert island's craggy cliffs
The mariner turns gladly off, so Tauris
Lay then behind me. Now again the voice
Of this kind man hath roused me from my
dreams

Reminding me that those whom I desert
Are also men ; and doubly my deception
Seems hateful. But compose thyself, my soul !
Beginn'st thou now to waver and to doubt ?
The firm soil of this holy solitude
Must now be left behind ! Again embarked,
The mounting waves will rock thee. Sad and
anxious

Thou dost mistake the world both and thyself.

FOURTH SCENE.

IPHIGENIA—PYLADES.

PYLADES.

Where is she? that with wingéd words I may
Bring her the joyous message of our safety!

IPHIGENIA.

Thou seest me here of care full and expecting
The certain consolation thou dost promise.

PYLADES.

Thy brother is now cured! The rocky soil
Of this unhallowed coast and its smooth sand
We walked in confidential conversation;
The grove we left behind us unperceived.
And glorious and e'er more glorious
The glowing flame of youthful beauty blazed

Around his curly head ; his full eye sparkled
With hope and courage, and his heart now free
Flowed forth in undivided joy and transport,
To save thee his protectress and myself.

IPHIGENIA.

May blessings come upon thee ; and may never
The sound of sorrow or of wail proceed
From thy blest lips, that brought me such glad
tidings.

PYLADES.

I bring thee more than this ; for with fair escort
Fortune is wont to come, like some great prince.
Our trusty comrades also we have found ;
In a rock-sheltered bay they kept concealed
The ship, and sat there mourning and expectant.
They saw thy brother ; whereupon they rose,
All shouting loud, and then beseeching urged
him

To speed the hour of our departure homeward.
Each fist of theirs is longing for the oar ;
Even a whispering breeze raised from the land—
At once perceived by all—its gracious wings.
Let us now hasten, lead me to the temple,
Let me its holy precincts enter, let me
With reverence seize the object of our wish.
I shall alone suffice to bear away
The sacred image on my well-tried shoulders ;
Oh, how I long for this delicious burden !

(In uttering the last words, he advances towards the temple, without perceiving that Iphigenia does not follow ; at last he turns around.)

Thou stopp'st and hesitat'st—tell me—art silent !
Thou dost appear confused ! Is some new mischief

Our happiness opposing ? Tell me, pray !
Has thou perhaps divulgéd to the king
The artful secret which we had concerted ?

IPHIGENIA.

I have, dear friend.—But thou wilt blame the
act ;

Thy very look to me was silent chiding !
The royal messenger arrived, and I
Told him the words which thou thyself hadst
taught me.

He seemed astonished, and demanded first
To inform the king of this solemnity
Unwonted, and to learn his will and pleasure ;
And now I am awaiting his return.

PYLADES.

Alas ! anew the danger hovers now
Around our heads ! Why hast thou not discreetly
Asserted thy mysterious right of priestly office ?

IPHIGENIA.

I never used it for dissimulation.

PYLADES.

Then will thy soul unspotted bring destruction
On us both and thyself. Why did I not provide
For this emergency before, and teach thee
To evade the danger too of this demand !

IPHIGENIA.

Chide me, the blame is mine, I feel it deeply ;
Still I could otherwise not meet the man,
Who earnestly demanded, and with reason,
What my own heart confessed to be his right.

PYLADES.

More dangerous the tempest lowers ; But thus
e'en

Let us not yet despair, nor inconsiderate
With unbecoming haste ourselves betray.
The messenger's return await thou calmly,
And then stand fast, whatever he may bring :
For it behoooves the priestess, not the king,

Such lustral ceremony to arrange.
And if the stranger he demands to see,
Whose mind is charged with frenzy's heavy
weight,
Decline it, as if thou didst keep us both
Well guarded in the temple. Thus procure
Us room for speedy flight, and for purloining
The sacred image from these barbarous hands.
Apollo sends us omens all auspicious,
Benignant like a God fulfils his promise,
E'en ere we can fulfil our pious vow.
Orestes is now free and healed ! With him
Oh lead us over, favorable breezes,
To yonder rocky isle where dwells the god !
Then to Mycenæ let us bring new life,
That from the ashes of the expiring hearth
The Lares joyously may rise again,
And new-lit fires their dwelling circumfuse
With holy light ! this hand shall be the first
To pour sweet incense out of golden bowl.

To yonder threshold thou bring'st back again
Both happiness and life, dost expiate
The withering curse, and all thy house adorn
With glorious blossoms of new light and power.

IPHIGENIA.

As flowers turn their leaflets to the sun,
Thus, when I listen to thee, friend, my soul,
Smit by the genial ray of thy sweet words,
To healing consolation turns its face.
How precious is the present friend's discourse,
Whose heavenly confidence-inspiring power
The Solitary lacks, and sinks in grief.
For thought and resolution ripen slow,
When locked up in the heart; the presence only
Of loving friends matures them speedily.

PYLADES.

Farewell! I hie me quickly to console
My comrades, who await me anxiously.
Then straight will I return, and watch thy nod,

Securely sheltered in yon rocky thicket.
Art pensive? all at once a cloud of sadness
Is silently o'ercasting thy free brow.

IPHIGENIA.

Forgive me! As light clouds before the sun,
Thus now before my soul care passes by,
And secret apprehension.

PYLADES.

Do not fear!
For fear deceptively with danger made
A compact firm and close; both are companions.

IPHIGENIA.

I call that fear a noble one which warns me,
The king, who was to me a second father,
Not treacherously to deceive or rob.

PYLADES.

Thou fleest from him who would destroy thy
brother.

IPHIGENIA.

He is the same that loaded me with kindness.

PYLADES.

Necessity's command is not ingratitude.

IPHIGENIA.

Ingratitude it ever will remain ;
Necessity can but excuse the deed.

PYLADES.

Most surely, both before the gods and men.

IPHIGENIA.

But my own heart will not be satisfied.

PYLADES.

Too great severity is hidden pride.

IPHIGENIA.

I judge not or inquire, but only feel.

PYLADES.

Feel rightly, and thou wilt adore thyself.

IPHIGENIA.

X Th'unspotted heart alone can be at peace.

PYLADES.

Thus in the temple thou hast kept thyself ;
Life teaches us to be less with ourselves,
With others more severe ; thou learn'st it too.
So curiously fashioned is our race,
So variously linked and intertwined,
That no one in himself or towards his neighbor
Can keep his heart of contradiction pure.
To judge ourselves we have not been appointed ;
The first, next duty of a man is this :
To walk, and to consider well his path ;
What he has done he seldom rightly values,
And scarcely can he value what he does.

IPHIGENIA.

Thou almost winn'st me over to thy view.

PYLADES.

Needs one persuasion where there is no choice ?
To save thyself, thy brother and a friend,
There is but one way ; shall it be pursued ?

IPHIGENIA.

Oh, let me hesitate ! Thou couldst thyself not
Thus wrong without disquietude a man,
To whom for kindness thou might'st feel indebted.

PYLADES.

A more severe reproach, which brings despair,
Awaits thee, if our efforts prove abortive.
I see, thou art to losses not accustomed,
Since thou, a great misfortune to escape,
Wilt not e'en sacrifice an untrue word.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh bore I but a manly heart within me !
Which, when it cherishes some bold resolve,
Is closed and deaf to every other voice.

PYLADES.

In vain thou dost refuse ; with iron hand
Necessity commands, and her stern nod
Is law supreme, to which must e'en the gods
Submit their will. In silence rules majestic
The unadvised Sister of eternal Fate.
What she imposes, bear thou, and perform
Whate'er she bids. The rest thou knowest.

Soon

I shall return, that from thy spotless hand
I may receive the fair seal of deliverance.

FIFTH SCENE.

IPHIGENIA. (*Alone.*)

I must obey him ; for I see my loved ones
To danger imminent exposed. Alas !
My own fate also makes me ever sadder.
Oh shall I not that silent hope preserve,
Which I in solitude so fondly cherished ?
Or shall this curse endure for ever ? Shall
Our race, by heaven blest anew, not rise
To fame again ? What lasts for ever here ?
The highest happiness, life's fairest power
Grows faint at last ; why not this curse ?
And have I vainly hoped, sequestered here,
And from our house's fate kept separate,
One day with heart and hand both undefiled,
To expiate the mansion stained with guilt ?
Scarce has my brother to my arms returned,
From dire affliction wonderfully cured,
Scarce has the long-awaited ship arrived

To bear me to some port of natal soil,
When blind necessity imposes on me
With iron hand a double crime : the sacred
Much-honored image, to my care intrusted,
To rob and to deceive the king, my friend,
To whom I owe my life and destiny.
Oh may not in my heart at last spring up
Some foul aversion ! Nor the mortal hate
Of Titans (ancient deities) 'gainst you
Olympians seize too my tender breast
With vulture-talons ! Save and rescue me !
And save your sacred image in my soul !
The ancient lay resoundeth in my ears—
I had forgot it, would forget it gladly—
The Parcæ's lay, which dismal once they sang,
When Tantalus fell from his golden seat :
They sympathized with their once noble friend ;
Grim was their breast and fearful was their song.
Our nurse once sang it in our tender youth
Before us children, and I marked it well.

Let all men on earth here
The gods show due fear !
They hold their supreme sway
In hands everlasting,
Can use it to suit their
Own pleasure and will.

Let him fear them doubly,
Whom they raise to power !
On cliffs and on clouds are
Seats splendid prepared
'Round tables of gold.

If discord arises :
Disgraced and degraded,
The guests are hurled headlong
To depths full of darkness,
In vain there to wait for
A righteous decision,
In chains without light.

But they, they abide in
Their fortress eternal,
'Round tables of gold.

From mountain to mountains
They freely stride over ;
From depths of abysses
The breath of slain Titans
To them still ascendeth,
Like smoke from the altar,
A light waving cloud.

The rulers can turn their
Bright countenance blessed
From whole generations ;
Can shun in the grandson
The ancestor's once loved,
Still eloquent features,
To see and to love.

Thus sang the stern Sisters ;
The exile—he listens,
In dungeons of night,
The sire—to the echo,
Thinks of his descendants,
And shaketh his head.

FIFTH ACT.

FIRST SCENE

THOAS.—ARKAS.

ARKAS.

PERPLEXED I must confess, that I not know
Where I should now direct my apprehension.
Is it the prisoners who clandestinely
Their flight are planning? or is it the priestess
That succors them? The rumor flies about :
The ship, that brought these aliens to our shore,
Lies still secreted in some hidden inlet.
The frenzy of that man, this purifying rite,
The sacred pretext of delay, excite
More strongly still my forecast and mistrust.

THOAS.

Let speedily the priestess hither come !
Then go and make sharp inquest on the shore
From yonder fore-land to Diana's grove.
Refrain ~~not~~ from its sacred depths ; but plan
Your ambush circumspectly and attack them.
Where'er you find them, seize them, as you're
wont.

SECOND SCENE.

THOAS. (*Alone.*)

Rage frightfully alternates in my bosom ;
First against her, whom I have deemed so pure ;
Then towards myself, who fitted her for treason
By my excessive kindness and indulgence.
To slavery man soon gets reconciled
And finds obedience easy, when bereft

Of freedom altogether. Had she fallen
Into the rude hands of my ancestors,
And had their holy indignation spared her,
She would have deemed it bliss, herself alone
To save, and to her fortune would have been
Resigned ; would willingly have shed before
The altar alien blood, and called that duty
What was necessity. My kindness now
Calls up audacious wishes in her heart.
In vain I hoped to be to her united ;
She now contrives herself to shape her lot.
My heart she won by glozing flattery,
Which now I will resist ; thus doth she seek
Her way through craft and falsehood, and my
kindness
Doth seem to her an old prescriptive right.

THIRD SCENE.

IPHIGENIA.—THOAS.

IPHIGENIA.

Thou dost demand me ! What has brought thee
hither ?

THOAS.

Thou dost defer the offering ; tell me, why ?

IPHIGENIA.

I have to Arkas plainly told the reason.

THOAS.

I would myself still further like to hear it.

IPHIGENIA.

The goddess gives thee time yet for reflection.

THOAS.

This time appears to suit thy purpose well.

IPHIGENIA.

If for this barbarous resolve thy heart
Is hardened, thou shouldst not have come !
A king who gives inhuman stern behest,
Finds tools enough, who for reward and favor,
Clutch greedy half the curse of his fell deed ;
And still his presence will remain unsullied.
He meditates death, wrapt in heavy cloud,
His messengers bring flaming ruin down
Upon the head of the unhappy victim ;
But he, in high serenity suspended,
Rides in the storm, a god beyond our reach.

THOAS.

The holy lip gives utterance to wild notes.

IPHIGENIA.

Not priestess ! only Agamemnon's daughter.
Thou didst respect my word, when yet unknown,
And wouldst thou rashly now command the
princess ?

I learnt obedience from my earliest youth,
First to my parents, to a goddess next ;
Submissive have I ever felt my soul
Most beautifully free ; but to conform
My conduct to a man's unkind command
Or harsh decision, learnt I neither there nor here.

THOAS.

Our ancient law, not I, demands obedience.

IPHIGENIA.

We eagerly embrace established laws,
Which serve as weapons to our guilty passions.
Another one, more ancient still, exhorts me
To offer firm resistance—the command,
To which all strangers are inviolable.

THOAS.

Thou seem'st to have these prisoners near at
heart ;
For in thy sympathy and agitation,

Thou dost forget the first demand of prudence,
That one should not provoke a potent man.

IPHIGENIA.

Whether I speak or guard my silence, thou
Canst always ascertain, in either case,
The unalterable purpose of my mind.
Doth not the memory of an equal fate
Unlock a closed heart to kind compassion ?
Much more mine own ! I see myself in them ;
For I have trembled too before the altar,
When solemnly an early death surrounded
Me kneeling, and the knife was raised already
To pierce my throbbing bosom full of life ;
My inmost soul recoiled with dizzy horror,
My eye grew dim, and—I awoke alive !
Are we not bound to render to misfortune,
What gods have kindly granted to ourselves ?
Thou know'st it well, and still wilt use com-
pulsion !

THOAS.

Obey thy holy office, not thy master.

IPHIGENIA.

Desist ! nor palliate the violence,
Which takes delight in woman's frailty.
By birth I am as free as any man.
Were Agamemnon's son to stand before thee,
And thou demandedst what was unbecoming,
He too would have a valiant arm and sword,
The right of his own bosom to defend.
But I have only words, and it behooves
The noble man, a woman's word to honor.

THOAS.

I do regard it more than brother's sword.

IPHIGENIA.

The chance of arms is ever vacillating ;
No prudent warrior doth despise a foe.

Nor has kind nature left her weaker creatures
Without defence 'gainst insolence and hardness.
She furnished them with cunning, taught them
arts ;

Now they elude, retard now or avoid.
Indeed, the strong deserve such practice well.

THOAS.

Shrewd foresight does become a match for craft.

IPHIGENIA.

A pure soul never makes a use of it.

THOAS.

Speak not unwarily a verdict on thyself.

IPHIGENIA.

Couldst thou but see the struggle of my soul,
To ward off valiantly the first attack
Of that fell demon that would seize it now !
Am I then quite defenceless here against thee ?

The gentle prayer, that graceful branch of peace,
More potent in a woman's hand than sword
Or other weapon, thou repell'st unmoved.
What now remains me to defend my conscience?
Shall I invoke the goddess for some wonder?
Is there no power in my being's depth?

THOAS.

The fate of these two strangers seems to cause
thee
Immoderate grief. Who are they? Tell,
For whom thy soul so powerfully pleads.

IPHIGENIA.

They are—they seem—I hold them to be Greeks.

THOAS.

Are countrymen? and have perchance revived
The beauteous picture of thy native land?

IPHIGENIA. (*After pausing a while.*)

Has then a man alone the right to achieve
Unheard-of deeds? And can *he* press alone
The Impossible against his breast heroic?
What call men great? What oft-repeated tale
Can stir the soul to shuddering sympathy?
What, save the acts of noble prowess wrought
'Mid perilous success? He who surprises
Alone by night the army of the foe,
And raging, like an unexpected flame,
In bloody carnage bathes the drowsy host,
Then pressed at last by their awaking might,
On hostile steed returns, with booty laden—
Does he alone win fame? or he alone,
Who leaves frequented ways disdainfully
And penetrates, undaunted, woods and moun-
tains,
To exterminate the infesting horde of robbers?
Is nothing left to us? Must woman only

Renounce the birthright of her tender sex,
Be fierce and savage, like an Amazon,
And wrest from you the bloody right of sword,
To avenge oppression ? Now a bold resolve
Arises billowing in my troubled breast,
Nor can I ever keen reproach escape
Or heavy woe, if this attempt should fail ;
Still I will frankly lay it on thy knees !
If thou art true, as fame has loudly vaunted,
Then prove it by thy succor, and through me
Adorn the truth ! Yes, hear it, potent king,
We have been planning here clandestine fraud ;
In vain thou wilt inquire for the captives,
They're gone in search of their secreted comrades,
Who with the ship are waiting on the shore.
The eldest, whom the malady here seized,
And now has left quite free—it is Orestes,
My brother, and his bosom-friend the other
From earliest youth, his name is Pylades.

Apollo sends them hither to this shore
From Delphi, with divine command, to rob
From us Diana's image and to bring
The sister thither to him ; for which deed
He promised to the fury-driven wretch
Redemption from the guilt of matricide.
I have now placed us both at thy disposal—
Last remnant of the race of Tantalus.
Destroy us—if thou dar'st.

THOAS.

Think'st thou perhaps
The uncouth barbarous Scythian will hear
'The voice of truth and of humanity,
To which even Grecian Atreus was once deaf?

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis heard by every man of every clime,
In whose unsullied breast life's fountain clear
And unimpeded flows. What musest thou

So silently in deepest soul, O king ?
Is it destruction ? Oh then kill me first !
For now, that all our hope of safety has
Deserted us, I feel the frightful danger
In which my loved ones rashly I have plunged,
And wilfully. Alas ! I shall behold them
In bonds before me ! With what sort of look
Can I my brother bid the long farewell,
When I shall butcher him ? Never more can I
Look into those dear eyes of his again !

THOAS.

Thus have with artful fiction these impostors
Thrown such foul tissue round the head of her,
Who, long sequestered, easy credit lent
And willing to ~~their~~ wishes !

IPHIGENIA.

No ! king, no !
I'm liable to be deceived indeed ; but these

Are true and faithful. If thou find'st them other,
Then may they fall, and let me be disowned
And banished to atone my grievous folly,
On some deserted island's dreary shore.
But if this man is my beloved brother,
Long wished and prayed for, then release us
both,
And be the brother's friend as thou wast of the
sister.

My father perished by his consort's guilt,
She through her son. The last remaining hope
Of Atreus' race rests now on him alone !

Let me with spotless heart, with spotless hand
Depart, to purify our house from crime.

Thou keep'st me word ! Has not thy oath as-
sured me,

That I might go, if ever to return

I found occasion ? Now it is at hand.

A king does not, like common men embarrassed

Make promise, for a moment to get rid

Of onerous importunity, nor even
In cases where he hopes not to fulfil it.
Then only does he feel his worth majestic,
When he can make the waiting suppliant happy.

THOAS.

Impatient, as when fire with water blended
In fiercest strife and noisy hissing seeks
Its foe to vanquish, thus my bosom now
Revolts in angry heavings at thy words.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh let thy mercy, like the holy light
Of altar-flame serene, to me, encircled
With hymns of gratitude and joy, now blaze !

THOAS.

How often did this voice appease me once.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh reach me now thy hand as pledge of peace.

THOAS.

So soon, and such exorbitant demand ?

IPHIGENIA.

For doing good there's need of no reflection.

THOAS.

Of much ! For e'en the good may lead to evil.

IPHIGENIA.

'Tis only doubt that turns the good to evil.

Consider not ; but grant as feeling prompts.

FOURTH SCENE.

ORESTES (*armed*).—THE FORMER.

ORESTES (*turning towards the scene*).

Redouble now your forces ! Keep them back !
But few brief moments longer ! Do not yield
To their superior mass ; defend the way
For me and sister seaward !

(*to IPHIGENIA without observing the king.*)

Come, we are
Betrayed. Our time for flight is short. Be
quick !

(*Perceives the king.*)

THOAS (*grasping his sword*).

No man unpunished in my presence wears
A naked sword.

IPHIGENIA.

Oh do not desecrate
Diana's dwelling here with rage and murder.
Give orders to your men to stay, and listen
To me, the priestess and the sister.

ORESTES.

Tell me!
Who is this man that threatens us?

IPHIGENIA.

Revere

In him the king, who was my second father!
Forgive me, brother! Yet my childlike heart
Has laid our lot entirely in his hand.
Your whole design I have disclosed to him,
And saved my soul from treason and despair.

ORESTES.

And will he grant us peaceable return?

IPHIGENIA.

Thy gleaming sword forbids me to reply.

ORESTES (*putting up the sword*).

Then speak ! Thou seest me ready to obey.

FIFTH SCENE.

THE FORMER—PYLADES. *Soon after him, AR-*

KAS. *Both with drawn swords.*

PYLADES.

Delay not thus ! our friends are rallying
Their utmost forces ; slowly giving way
They are now driven back towards the sea.
But here I find a princely conference !
This is the king's most venerable head !

ARKAS.

Cool and composed, as it behooves the king,
Thou stand'st in presence of the enemy.
This bold temerity will soon be punished,
Their faction yields and falls, the ship is ours.
A word from thee, and it will stand in flames.

THOAS.

Go ! bid my warriors halt ! Let no one dare
To harm the foe, while we are parleying here.

(Exit ARKAS.)

ORESTES.

I will accept the truce. Go, friend, collect
The remnant of our men ; await then calmly
The issue which the gods prepare for us.

(Exit PYLADES.)

SIXTH SCENE.

IPHIGENIA—THOAS—ORESTES.

IPHIGENIA.

Relieve me from my care, ere ye commence
To speak. I apprehend unhappy discord,
If thou, oh king, hear'st not the gentle voice
Of moderation ; and if thou, my brother,
Wilt not restrain the impulse of rash youth.

THOAS.

I will my anger check, as it behooves me,
The elder ; answer me, what proof canst thou
adduce,
That thou art truly Agamemnon's son,
And brother of this maid ?

ORESTES.

Here is the sword,
With which he slew the valiant men of Troy.
I wrested it from his assassin, begging

The gods, the arm and courage, the success
Of my great father to bestow on me,
And a more honorable death to grant me.
Choose from the noblest of thy army one,
And place the bravest as a match before me.
As far as earth supports heroic sons,
No stranger is denied this privilege.

THOAS.

No ancient custom granted ever here
This right to strangers.

ORESTES.

Oh then let begin
From me and thee this noble custom new !
By imitation a whole nation sanctions
Its ruler's generous deed, and makes it law.
And let me not for our own freedom simply,
Let me, the stranger for the stranger, fight.
Fall I, then let their sentence with mine own

Be spoken. But if fortune does vouchsafe me
To conquer, then let never any man
This shore approach, whom not the rapid look
Of helping charity shall meet ! Consoled
And kindly aided let each hence depart !

THOAS.

Thou seem'st well worthy of the ancestors,
From whom thou boastest high descent, oh youth.
Great is of noble valiant men the number,
Which follow me ; still I can yet myself
Spite of my age confront the foe, am ready
At once to risk with thee the chance of arms.

IPHIGENIA.

By no means ! Of this bloody demonstration
There is no need, oh king ! let from the sword
Thy hand refrain ! Think of me and my fate,
The hurried contest makes a man immortal ;

Though he may fall, the lay will sing his praise.

The tears, however, infinitely gushing

Of the surviving friends, and wife bereft,

Posterity counts not ; no poet names

The thousand days and nights in weeping spent,

In which a quiet soul strives to recall

The friend so suddenly deceased, so early lost,

And pines away in slow-consuming grief.

An anxious care has warmed even me at first,

Lest some foul robber's craft should tear me

From my secure asylum, and to servitude

Betray me. Carefully I questioned them,

For every circumstance inquired, signs

Demanded ; and my heart is certain now.

Lo, here on his right hand the natural spot

As of three stars, which on the self-same day,

When he was born, appeared, from which the

priest

Prognosticated heavy deed, to be

Wrought by his sinewy fist. Besides, the scar,

Which splits one of his eyebrows there, to me
Is double proof. When yet a child, Electra
In her improvident and hasty mood
Let fall the darling from her careless arms.
He struck against a tripod—it is he—
Shall I still more, our sire's similitude,
Shall I the inward shouting of my heart
Call up as proof and witnesses before thee?

THOAS.

And did thy speech unravel every doubt,
And could I check my anger in my breast,
Still there were need of arms between us,
To settle this dispute ; I see no peace.
They're come to rob, as thou thyself hast owned,
The sacred image of the goddess from me.
Think ye, that I shall idly suffer this ?
The Grecian often casts a greedy eye
On treasures far remote of barbarous tribes,
On golden fleece, on horses, on fair maids ;

But violence and craft not always bring
Him safely home, with plundered booty laden.

ORESTES.

The statue shall not disunite us, king !
Now we perceive the error, which a god
Like a thick veil, has thrown around our head,
When hither our way he bid us wend.
For counsel and deliverance I begged him
From the pursuit of Furies ; and he said :
“ Bring'st thou the sister, who on Tauris' shore
Remains unwilling in the sanctuary,
To Hellas back ; the curse will be atoned ! ”
We did refer it to Apollo's sister,
And he intended *thee* ! The rigid bonds
Are now dissolved ; and thou art to thy friends
Restored, O sacred maiden ! Touched by thee
I was completely cured ; the evil malady
Seized me the last time in thy loving arms
With all its claws, and frightfully convulsed

The marrow in my bones ; whereon it fled
Like poisonous serpent to its hole. Anew
I now enjoy through thee the wide-spread light
Of day. Most glorious and fair appears now
Diana's counsel. Like a sacred image,
To which a city's fate unchangeably
The gods have linked by some mysterious word,
She took thee off, the guardian of our house ;
Kept thee secreted in a sacred silence
To prove a blessing to thy friends and brother.
When in the wide world all deliverance seemed
Impossible, thou dost restore us all.
Incline thy soul to reconciliation,
O king ! Prevent her not, with sacred rites,
From ancient guilt the ancestral house to cleanse,
And to restore me to its guiltless halls,
To place the ancient crown upon my head !
Requite the blessing, which she brought thee
here,
And let me now my nearer claim enjoy !

Force and deceit, man's highest laurels, stand
Before the truth of this exalted soul
Abashed ; a pure and childlike confidence
Placed in a noble man, meets its reward.

revels
of truth

IPHIGENIA.

Think of thy word, and let by this discourse
Proceeding from veracious upright mouth
Thy heart be moved ! Look on us ! For not
oft
Will opportunity for such fair deed occur.
Refuse thou canst not ; therefore grant it soon !

THOAS.

Then go !

IPHIGENIA.

No, no, my king ! Without a blessing,
Reluctantly I will not part with thee.

Exile us not ! Let friendly hospitality
Subsist between us ; then we will not be
For ever separated. Dear and cherished,
As was to me my father, so art thou,
And in my soul is this impression fixed.
And if the humblest of thy people ever
Bring to my ear such sound of human voice,
As I am wont to hear among you here ;
If on the poorest I perceive your costume,
I will receive him like a god from Heaven ;
Myself will I prepare a couch for him,
Invite him to a seat beside the fire,
Thou and thy fate will be my only question.
Oh may the gods the well-earned guerdon grant
 thee
Of thy kind deeds and pure benignity !
Farewell ! Oh turn to us, and give me back
A parting word of love, ere we go hence !
Then will the wind more gently swell the sail,
And tears will flow more softly from the eye

Of the departing one. Farewell ! and reach me
In pledge of ancient friendship thy right hand.

THOAS.

Farewell !

THE END.







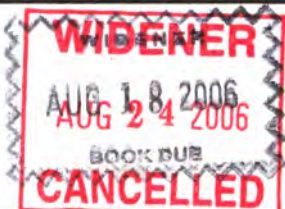


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